

# *Western Oklahoma's Regiment*

## *The 179th Infantry*



*By Penn V. Rabb, Jr.\**

In the early years of the new century, communities and individuals across the United States will commemorate American participation in the Korean Conflict of fifty years ago. Many of the units engaged in the war were federalized state national guards. Among the sons, husbands, brothers, friends, and neighbors who have always willingly answered the call for national service in times of global turmoil were men who also willingly stood guard in peacetime as citizen soldiers. In western Oklahoma the 179th Infantry Regiment of the Oklahoma National Guard has a

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long and illustrious history of service to the people of Oklahoma, the nation, and the world.

The roots of the 179th formed in the days before statehood as the First Infantry Regiment of the Oklahoma Volunteer Militia. In July, 1898, together with recruits from the territories of Arizona and New Mexico, the First Infantry Regiment mustered into federal service for the Spanish-American War.<sup>1</sup> After being mustered out in February, 1899, the Oklahoma elements reorganized again as the First Oklahoma Infantry.

Following statehood in 1907, the First Infantry, then part of the Oklahoma National Guard, answered the call to service in June and July, 1916, for service along the Mexican border, following Pancho Villa's attacks on Columbus, New Mexico. The First Infantry was released from federal duty on March 1, 1917, but returned to duty thirty days later for World War I. The First consolidated with the Seventh Infantry, Texas National Guard and became the 142nd Infantry, part of the Thirty-sixth Infantry Division. Following service in France, during which it participated in the Meuse-Argonne Campaign, the Oklahoma element left the Thirty-sixth Division and demobilized in June, 1919.<sup>2</sup>

With men from the Oklahoma National Guard serving in World War I, the state was without its authorized infantry regiment. A new regiment, the Second, completed organization in August, 1918. Because so many communities wanted units, another regiment, the Third, was also formed. Those regiments and a battalion organized later made up the Oklahoma National Guard until 1920.<sup>3</sup>

When the Forty-fifth Infantry Division was organized in October, 1921, the Second Infantry was redesignated the 179th Infantry.<sup>4</sup> Nearly five years later on March 8, 1926, the regiment's distinctive insignia was approved. It consisted of a shield with a tomahawk and a peace pipe crossed in saltire. Both are the Native American emblems of war and peace and reflect the heritage of the regiment's personnel.

By the late 1930s another world war was looming on the horizon. As a result of early German victories in Europe, the United States began measures to improve its military capabilities. The 179th Infantry Regiment reported for federal service for the first time on September 16, 1940, as a part of the Forty-fifth Infantry Division. By the end of World War II, the Forty-fifth had achieved a distinguished combat record, having fought in Sicily, Italy, France, and Germany, with 511 days spent in combat. Its three infantry regiments, the 157th, the 179th, and the 180th, participated in amphib-

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ious operations in Sicily, at Salerno and Anzio in Italy, and in southern France. All three regiments were involved in liberating and rehabilitating the wretched prisoners at the infamous Dauchau Concentration Camp. By VE day on May 9, 1945, the Thunderbirds, as the men of the Forty-fifth became known, had earned eight campaign streamers.<sup>5</sup> Following a cessation of hostilities, the division was deactivated in December, 1945.

Efforts to reorganize the division began in the spring of 1946. A distinguished former Thunderbird, Lieutenant General Raymond S. McLain, spent several months in Oklahoma guiding the process. McLain recommended Colonel James C. Styron, a Forty-fifth veteran and West Point graduate, to command the newly organized division.

The postwar reorganization brought about significant changes. The entire division was located in Oklahoma, rather than in Oklahoma, Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico as it had been. That meant organizing an entirely new regiment in Oklahoma. The 279th Infantry was located in the northeastern quarter of the state; the 180th Infantry returned to southeastern Oklahoma. Sparsely populated western Oklahoma became the home of the 179th Infantry.

When the 179th began its postwar reorganization in western Oklahoma in 1946, General McLain recommended Colonel Frederick A. Daugherty as its commander. Daugherty was no stranger to the regiment, having enlisted as a private in Headquarters Company, First Battalion in May, 1934. He was commissioned in October, 1935. Daugherty, a lawyer in general practice, rose to the rank of first lieutenant by the time of the 1940 mobilization. He attended Command and General Staff College and expected to return to the Forty-fifth Division. However, he was assigned to Third Army and served with it in the Asiatic-Pacific Theater for the remainder of the war, rising to the rank of colonel.<sup>6</sup>

Among Daugherty's first duties as regimental commander was to select battalion commanders. McLain had stipulated that Lieutenant Colonel Harry W. Hughes be given command of one of the battalions. That was not a problem for Daugherty because Hughes, a native of western Oklahoma, had a distinguished combat record with the 179th Infantry in World War II. Hughes took command of the First Battalion which had its headquarters in Clinton, rifle companies in Oklahoma City, El Reno, and Elk City, and its heavy weapons company in Norman.<sup>7</sup>

Anse H. Spears, another combat veteran of the Forty-fifth, accepted command of the Second Battalion. Its headquarters was in

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Lawton with rifle companies in Walters, Frederick, and Ardmore, which was also the home of the heavy weapons company. Spears, a Lawton businessman, had served as a company commander and battalion staff officer in the 157th Infantry during World War II.<sup>8</sup>

Lieutenant Colonel Fred P. Snyder of Edmond commanded the Third Battalion. Snyder was familiar with the 179th, having joined the regiment in 1934 after graduating from high school. He was a member of Headquarters Company, 179th Infantry during the mobilization in 1940, serving as a regimental staff officer, rifle company commander, and eventually battalion commander.<sup>9</sup> Snyder chose the neighboring city of Guthrie as the location of his headquarters. Rifle companies were located in Perry, Enid, and Watonga, the heavy weapons company in Kingfisher.

Daugherty was pleased to have three combat-experienced officers to lead the infantry battalions. The remaining regimental companies, referred to as the unlettered battalion, included Headquarters Company in Edmond, Service Company in Oklahoma City, Cannon Company in Mangum, and Anti-Tank Company in Altus.

Selecting the right personnel to man the units was the most important ingredient for success, and the key man in each company

*General J. Lawton Collins (c), chief of Army Field Forces, observed a tactical exercise by the 179th Infantry. Map reading and compass training sessions also occupied a place on the training schedule for James Cannon, Jack Perry, Frank L. Garrison, and Richard McFarland, members of Headquarters Company, Second Battalion (p. 196) (All photographs courtesy Forty-fifth Infantry Division Museum, unless noted).*



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was its commander. The officers chosen to lead the units came from a variety of backgrounds, including many from other branches of service. Some, like Hal Adamson, Jr., were naturals. Adamson took command of the regimental headquarters company in Edmond, the unit in which he had enlisted as a young man and had served during part of World War II. As a means of attracting enlistments, Adamson organized a boxing team and brought in a number of outstanding boxers from what was then Central State College.<sup>10</sup>

No officer with infantry experience came forward to command Company I in Perry, so a former navy man took the job. David C. Matthews had enlisted in the National Guard in Sulphur when only fourteen. He was discharged when he enrolled in the University of Oklahoma where he became a national wrestling champion. During World War II he saw action in the Pacific, and after discharge he went to Perry to practice law. Matthews believed the local veterans' organizations provided an ideal place to begin his recruiting efforts and he was highly successful.<sup>11</sup>

Although he was not the original commander of Company C in Elk City, Captain Wayne Woodman, who had served with the combat engineers in Europe, was approached by the Elk City Chamber of Commerce to consider replacing the man who had organized the unit. Because he wanted to ensure his home town retained its new National Guard unit, Woodman accepted the assignment. The need for his leadership skills would not be long in coming.<sup>12</sup>

Ardmore's Company H had a veteran company commander, Captain Robert L. Peddy. An integral part of Peddy's staff was his executive officer, Lieutenant George M. Donovan, who had been an enlisted man in that unit when it mobilized in 1940. Donovan rose to the rank of staff sergeant by the time he went overseas in 1943. He won the Silver Star for outstanding leadership, received a battlefield commission, and was later wounded and captured. Donovan escaped from a prison camp in Poland and after being hidden by a Polish family made his way through Russia back to Italy to rejoin his own army. His experience and proven leadership were great assets to Company H.<sup>13</sup> Jack Mitchell, another World War II veteran, became an officer in Company D in Norman. Mitchell was well known to football fans throughout the state; he was the star quarterback for the University of Oklahoma Sooners.

Whereas the 179th was led by outstanding officers, as is true with any line regiment, its real strength lay in its enlisted men. Many veterans showed no interest in resuming military service, but some joined the enlisted ranks of the 179th. Among them were

Ferrell Phillips, a non-commissioned officer (NCO) who had been in a bomber crew flying missions over Italy, and Boyd Vantine, an experienced infantryman who had fought on a beachhead at Anzio. Both Phillips and Vantine joined Company E in Walters.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, Staff Sergeant William J. Bruner, a member of an engineering unit during the war, joined Company F at nearby Frederick. Soon Bruner became the caretaker for Company F, the unit's only full-time employee.<sup>15</sup>

The majority of enlistees were young men just out of high school with no prior military service. Others were still in school when they joined, some not yet seventeen, the minimum age for enlistment. Units with recruiting problems often overlooked the requirement and accepted falsified dates of birth. Two such young men enlisted in Company B at El Reno.

William Shirey was the first new private to join. He rode from town to Fort Reno, where Company B was housed, in the unit's two-and-one-half-ton truck, which was dispatched on drill nights to pick up members.<sup>16</sup> Bill Gustafson was another El Reno youth who joined because he had always wanted to be a soldier. He became the company bugler, having played the trumpet in the high school band.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, in Norman, one young enlistee was James Bumgarner. He did not remain in the unit long, but perhaps his military training prepared him for a role he was to play many years later. He changed his name to James Garner, became an actor, and starred in movies and television. Garner played the role of Colonel William O. Darby in the popular movie, *Darby's Rangers*. Ironically, Colonel Darby was a wartime commander of the 179th Infantry following his service in the Rangers.<sup>18</sup>

Vernon Askew of Oklahoma City was a high school junior in November, 1946, when a friend persuaded him to ride his bicycle to the huge armory on Twenty-third Street to investigate the "Guard." Askew did not know what the Guard was but decided to go along when he learned he could earn the enticing sum of \$2.50 per drill. Both he and his friend enlisted as privates in Company A. Askew wore his cowboy boots with a World War II uniform, because the unit had no combat boots available for issue. Once Askew's typing skills became known, he became the company clerk.<sup>19</sup> John Rigdon also joined to earn some extra money, enlisting in Guthrie's Headquarters Company, Third Battalion. According to Rigdon, many members of the junior Reserve Officers Training Corps program at Guthrie High School joined the Guard, bringing with them the basic military skills they had learned at school.<sup>20</sup>



*In 1949 Sergeant Leamen Suttle (l) and Recruit Dan Newsom (c), both of Company H, Ardmore, received instruction in the use of the 30 caliber water-cooled machine gun from Sergeant Leslie Bliagh, Company B, El Reno. During exercises at Fort Sill (opposite), members also trained with 81 mm mortars (Copyright Oklahoma Publishing Company; taken from the Daily Oklahoman, August 14, 1949, left).*

The full-time employees of the National Guard were very important to the success of their units. Often referred to as “caretakers,” their primary duties were to take care of equipment and maintain personnel records, but they were also heavily involved in recruiting. Sergeant Bruner at Company F visited high schools in and around Frederick in search of recruits. His efforts took him to towns such as Grandfield, Tipton, Chattanooga, and Davidson where there were no National Guard units, and he succeeded in arousing the interest of some young men.<sup>21</sup>

Another man who became a caretaker was William C. Mitchell, Jr. Mitchell worked in a defense plant during World War II building fighter planes, but late in the war when the demand for planes subsided he volunteered for the draft. He became a company clerk when his first sergeant learned he could type. When he was discharged in mid-1946, he was advised to join one of the reserve components. Once back home in Ardmore, he enlisted in Company H and soon became its company clerk.<sup>22</sup> When he learned a new medical detachment would be organized in Ardmore, he applied for and received the caretaker’s job. There was no office furniture, so he built his own desk from scrap lumber. Office supplies were almost non-existent, so Mitchell learned to improvise. Military typing



paper was smaller than regular typing paper, so he cut down the regular to military size. He learned to expose carbon paper to heat to get extra use from that scarce item. Being a full-time employee of the National Guard at that time was not easy, but Mitchell stuck it out and went on to become one of the most respected employees to work for the Oklahoma National Guard.<sup>23</sup>

Facilities and equipment are essential components of regimental success. Many communities had armories built in the late 1930s by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Such structures were already available in Oklahoma City, Norman, Ardmore, Edmond, and Guthrie. Because the armories had been built in the late 1930s and had not been occupied during World War II, they were in excellent condition and ready for use in 1946. However, some cities had no armories and had to make do with some rather unusual facilities. Lawton, home of the Second Battalion Headquarters Company, used space beneath the high school football stadium. Company B in El Reno met in a gymnasium at nearby Fort Reno. Company F at Frederick used the old Link Trainer building at the vacant air base. Elk City's Company C trained in a building at a baseball field in a city park, and Company E in Walters held its meetings in a fair barn.



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In addition to facilities, the regiment also needed equipment with which to train. Rifles, pistols, machine guns, and mortars are the stock in trade of infantry outfits, and equipment left over from World War II was available. However, uniforms and boots were in short supply. Some uniforms had blood stains and bullet holes in them. The newly formed medical detachment, in particular, had trouble obtaining the necessary equipment with which to train. Nonetheless, training proceeded. Meetings were held one night a week, lasting two hours. With the equivalent of only one day a month to train, progress was slow.

The trainees faced an additional challenge because of the National Guard's dual role—responding in the event of a national emergency, as it did during World War II, and responding to state emergencies such as civil disturbances and natural disasters. Not long after the 179th reorganized, the first state emergency occurred.

During the night of April 9, 1947, a deadly tornado struck Woodward in northwestern Oklahoma, destroying more than 500 homes. The death toll rose to eighty-five within a few days after the storm. The Oklahoma National Guard came to the aid of the stricken community.

Among the units of the 179th Infantry providing disaster relief were Company B from El Reno and Company C from Elk City. Captain Wayne Woodman, the new commander of Company C, said his unit was one of the first to arrive. The company was to provide security for the perimeter of the affected area and motorized patrols during the hours of darkness. Officers issued live ammunition, and Woodman wisely chose his seasoned veterans to man the patrols.<sup>24</sup>

One of their responsibilities was to prevent looting. One patrol spotted a man thought to be a looter entering an area where relief supplies were stored. The men gave the alarm, and within a few minutes the Woodward police apprehended the man who turned out to be the local Red Cross director. He was very upset by the incident, but the men of Company C could not be faulted for their diligence.<sup>25</sup> For the most part, the people of Woodward appreciated the assistance given them by the guardsmen, despite their limited training.

A few weeks passed before Elk City's Company C was again involved in disaster relief. On May 31, 1947, a twister struck the small town of Leedey. An Elk City doctor whose daughter lived in Leedey called Captain Woodman for help. The captain knew he needed authority to respond to the request and attempted to call the governor, the adjutant general, and the division commander. He

was unable to reach any of them. He next called his battalion commander who told him he had no authority to send Company C to assist. Woodman took it upon himself to proceed and assembled his men. He assured his battalion commander he would continue to seek approval from his superiors.<sup>26</sup>

Company C arrived in Leedeey about midnight. A large crowd had gathered in the business district, and highway patrolmen, already at the scene and fearing looting, asked Woodman to deploy his men and clear the area. They fixed bayonets, spread out from one side of the street to the other, and moved the crowd out of the area, quickly restoring control. Six people died in the Leedeey tornado, and much of the north half of the town was damaged or destroyed. Company C stayed in Leedeey two more days before being relieved by Headquarters Company, First Battalion, 179th Infantry, from Clinton.<sup>27</sup>

Following their tornado relief efforts, the 179th began preparation for its first summer camp since the 1940 mobilization. It was to be held in August, 1947, at Fort Sill. The approach of summer training presented a major problem for Captain David Matthews of Company I. He had great success in recruiting veterans because he sold them on a six-month enlistment. A major selling point had been the expectation of no summer camp in 1947, and the six-month enlistment gave the veterans an opportunity to decide whether or not to remain in the company without having to take time from their civilian jobs for camp. When Matthews learned there would be a camp, he offered the veterans discharges. Most opted for the discharge, and as a result Company I took fewer than twenty men to Fort Sill. Colonel Daugherty learned of the mass exodus and called Matthews in for an explanation. When Daugherty learned what had happened, he asked the captain how many men he expected to bring to camp the following summer. When Matthews said he planned to bring 100 men in 1948, Daugherty said nothing further.<sup>28</sup>

When the 179th Infantry, together with the rest of the Forty-fifth Infantry Division, arrived at Fort Sill on August 10, 1947, it participated in the first divisional summer camp to be conducted in the United States since the 1940 mobilization. An estimated 5,000 Thunderbirds attended.<sup>29</sup>

During the summer camp, boxing was a popular pastime and the men held numerous matches at the Artillery Bowl as part of the division boxing tournament. Omer Manley, fighter from Headquarters Company, 179th Infantry was named the tournament's outstanding boxer. Manley would have a long association with the

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179th and had the opportunity to display more of his fighting traits in 1952 on an outpost in a place he did not know existed in August, 1947.<sup>30</sup>

Sergeant Charles Brantley of Company D was the winner of a contest to select the official division cartoonist. Brantley, a veteran of the 101st Airborne Division during World War II, was the successor to Bill Mauldin, the best-known cartoonist of the war, whose work appeared in the *45th Division News*.<sup>31</sup>

Following the regiment's time at Fort Sill, one of its units relocated. Company G, a rifle company housed in Ardmore, moved to Healdton. Lieutenant Hobart Heartsill, the company commander, took about twenty-five enlisted men with him when the unit moved into the WPA armory which had not been in use since before the war.

In August, 1948, the regiment participated in its second postwar summer camp, once again at Fort Sill. Captain David Matthews made good on his pledge of the previous summer and brought 120 men.<sup>32</sup> Unseasonably cool weather greeted the troops, but it did not



Colonels Preston J. C. Murphy, Frederick A. Daugherty, and William Harrison (l to r) observed a regimental parade during the 1949 summer camp.

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last long. The 179th took the field early as temperatures soared to 107 degrees while the regiment bivouacked.

Boxers from the 179th won the team trophy during the division matches. Captain Matthews's Company I received a commendation for its performance during a field exercise involving the rifle platoon in attack. The Second Battalion Headquarters Company provided the honor guard for General Jacob Devers, Chief of Army Field Forces, when he visited the division.

In the months following summer camp, the 179th experienced a number of organizational changes. Cannon Company at Mangum reorganized as Heavy Mortar Company and moved to Pauls Valley, a community with no National Guard unit. Anti-Tank Company at Altus changed to Heavy Tank Company and moved to Healdton which had been the home of Company G. Company G moved to Marlow, where the Forty-fifth Military Police Company had been for many years. Marlow was the third community in which the unit had been located since 1946. A medical company replaced the medical detachment in Ardmore.

The transitions in Healdton and Marlow went smoothly, but the move to Pauls Valley proved a bit more complicated. Captain Harold Liles, the assistant county agent in Pauls Valley, took command of the unit. There was no armory, so the unit used a vacant building as a temporary location. Liles also had to build the unit strength from zero. Soon men from the surrounding towns of Paoli, Lindsay, and Wynnewood joined those from Pauls Valley to staff the unit. Liles also faced serious training problems because no one in the unit was familiar with the 4.2-inch mortar.<sup>33</sup>

While the new units worked to get established, Company L in Watonga answered the call to provide disaster relief following a tornado in the Canton-Longdale area in the early spring of 1949. However, the tables turned for the 179th on April 30, 1949. A tornado struck a rifle range near Norman where several units of the regiment were firing. Of the fifty-two men on the range, fifty were injured, some seriously. One was so gravely injured that he spent several months under a doctor's care.<sup>34</sup>

In August, 1949, the 179th participated in its third postwar summer camp. One young guardsman from Frederick, James D. "Buddy" Ryan, had to be brought to camp by the military police. He turned out to be a fine soldier and an even better football player and coach. He eventually became the head coach of two National Football League teams.<sup>35</sup>

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Colonel Preston J. C. Murphy, one of the regiment's World War II commanders, visited the camp, and Colonel Daugherty asked him to "take the review" as the 179th conducted a regimental parade. Two fine Native American boxers, Reaves Nahowoosky and Kent Tomah, and Jerry Brownrigg represented the 179th on the division boxing team which defeated the Fort Sill team in a benefit match.

Following summer camp, the regiment's new units went home with valuable experience, and training continued. Heavy Mortar Company helped provide disaster relief when a flood struck Pauls Valley on May 11, 1950. Captain Liles's men received high praise for their performance.<sup>36</sup>

Plans were under way for the 1950 summer camp at Fort Hood, Texas, when world events turned those plans upside down. On Sunday, June 25, 1950, the North Korean Army launched a series of attacks across the Thirty-eighth Parallel, the border with South Korea. The Korean Peninsula had been unceremoniously divided by the Soviets and Americans at the end of World War II, and the communist state of North Korea sought to reunite the country by force. When it became evident the South Korean Army could not contain the invaders, American ground forces from Japan were committed, but in a piece-meal manner. As a result, South Korean and American forces withdrew into the Pusan Perimeter.

As the United States mobilized to meet the threat, it became necessary to look to the reserve components. Four National Guard infantry divisions, including Oklahoma's Forty-fifth, were alerted for mobilization. On August 2, 1950, newspapers in Oklahoma announced that the Thunderbird Division would enter federal service on or about September 1.<sup>37</sup> Much work remained to be done during the month.

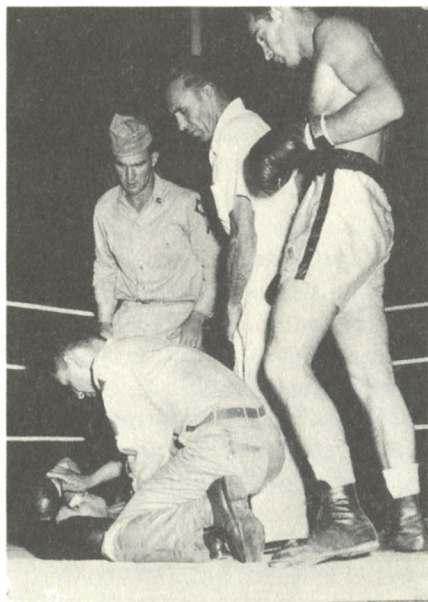
The Forty-fifth Division was more than 10,000 below full authorized strength, so a massive recruiting drive began, with the slogan "Go With The Men You Know." Units of the division not only had to recruit to fill existing vacancies but also the vacancies created by discharges of the many men who were underage or physically disqualified or who had family hardships. Lieutenant Colonel Spears, who commanded the Second Battalion, owned his own business and had a family. When told he could be discharged, Spears declined because he believed he could not face the families of the men he had recruited if he stayed at home.<sup>38</sup>

The recruiting efforts and the administrative requirements created by the mobilization brought about massive problems. William C. Mitchell, caretaker for Medical Company, and by then the unit's

first sergeant, called it the most difficult time in his long and distinguished career. Lieutenant Colonel Harry Hughes, commander of the Third Battalion, traveled by jeep from town to town to check his units' progress. The companies of the regiment went on an accelerated training program, drilling three nights a week rather than one. During the last three days of August, the companies drilled all day.

Many new recruits joined the ranks. In Lawton, Gene Gower, a former Lawton High School and Cameron College football star, expected to be drafted, so he and several of his friends enlisted in Headquarters Company, Second Battalion.<sup>39</sup> George Payne of Dover planned to enlist in the same artillery unit several of his brothers had served in during World War II. On his way there, he passed through Kingfisher where he stopped for something to drink. Before he realized it, he was persuaded to join the local unit, Company M, 179th Infantry.<sup>40</sup> Bob Green, an engineering student at the University of Oklahoma who had served in the merchant marine during World War II, was working a summer job in northern Oklahoma when he learned he had been reclassified 1-A for the draft. He returned home to Marlow, and along with several friends who were in the same predicament he enlisted in Company G.<sup>41</sup>

Ray Wall, a former navy man, was concerned that he would be called to active duty by the Naval Reserve, so he enlisted in Company D in Norman, thinking the National Guard was not likely to be mobilized. However, Wall soon found himself in the infantry.<sup>42</sup> Dick Grizzle of Enid had belonged to a field artillery unit in his hometown but took a job in Oklahoma City and stopped attending drills. When the mobilization orders came, he learned he was no longer in the artillery; he was assigned to Enid's Company K, 179th



*Boxing champion Jerry Brownrigg of the 179th division team stands over his opponent from the Fort Sill team during a match at the 1949 summer camp.*

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Infantry.<sup>43</sup> Bill Warren of Norman was among the last ones who decided to "Go With The Men You Know." Also expecting to be drafted, he joined Service Company in Oklahoma City, and his paperwork was back dated so he could meet the September 1 deadline for enlistment.<sup>44</sup>

The 179th had many officer vacancies, so experienced NCOs with service during World War II received commissions. Men such as Tom Young, caretaker for Marlow's Company G, and Frank Garrison and Sigurd Lund of Lawton's Headquarters Company, Second Battalion became second lieutenants. Jesse Smith of Norman, Jack Barber of Edmond, and Dale Ward of Lawton became warrant officers.

When the men left their armories on August 31, they left as National Guardsmen. When they returned on September 1, they were in the army. They continued to train for several days as plans progressed for the move to Camp Polk, Louisiana, where the 179th, along with the remainder of the division, would train. Many communities had farewell parties for their units or helped raise money for their unit funds.

The regiment traveled to Louisiana by train and motor convoy. Colonel Daugherty led the convoy that departed Fort Sill on September 7. The first units also left by train on that same date. Large crowds gathered at local depots to see the troops off. Many were leaving home for the second time in ten years. Others were leaving for the first time. The companies in the southern part of the state were the last to board as the trains moved south in the darkness toward Louisiana.

When the 179th arrived at Camp Polk, it found a post reflecting the neglect of having been closed since the end of World War II. Much work to get buildings and grounds in order followed, while training proceeded at a hectic pace. Many soldiers left for service schools at other army posts while the regiment conducted schools to prepare the men to receive filler personnel.

Some men took their families to Louisiana and found housing scarce and substandard. Bill Gustafson, a newlywed, took his new bride with him. They lived for a while in a Leesville apartment, which he described as a "terrible place," before moving to a more desirable one in De Ridder.<sup>45</sup> Ferrell Phillips of Company E found a duplex out in the country near Rosepine and shared the kitchen with another family. Clarence Wilson of Company F had a similar experience in De Ridder where his family shared both the kitchen

and bathroom.<sup>46</sup> Robert Johnson of Tank Company found an apartment in Hornbeck with no indoor toilet and a cistern for water.<sup>47</sup>

In late October and early November the character of the regiment changed dramatically. When thousands of fillers, including draftees and regular army enlistees, began to arrive, the 179th went from an organization dominated by men from western Oklahoma to one geographically diversified. The new men hailed from New York, California, Texas, Wisconsin, and states in between. Some even came from Oklahoma, those who had not chosen to "Go With The Men You Know."

Basic training began on November 6, 1950. By early 1951 alarming news came out of Korea. Despite early United Nations successes following the amphibious landing at Inchon and the subsequent drive to the Yalu River, Chinese intervention completely changed the situation. United Nations forces were driven back south of the Thirty-eighth Parallel. In late February, 1951, rumors that the Forty-fifth would be sent overseas proved true when the army announced that it would send the division to Japan to complete training and provide defense from possible Soviet attack. Men of the regiment began taking leaves immediately, and by late March the 179th left for New Orleans, its port of embarkation.

On March 30 the regiment boarded the USNS *Marine Lynx* and sailed by the way of the Panama Canal for Hokkaido, Japan's northern island. They arrived on April 28, 1951, set up camp near Chitose, and began eight months of grueling training. The men lived in the field most of the time, even after moving to Camp Crawford in early September. There, they once again had barracks and mess halls rather than pup tents and kitchen flies, at least when they were not involved in field exercises, which was most of the time.<sup>48</sup>

In early December the 179th was on the move to Korea to replace the war-weary First Cavalry Division. By Christmas the regiment occupied positions on Line Jamestown in the Chorwon Valley. The men battled both the Chinese and bitter cold during the early weeks there. Soon names like Old Baldy, T-Bone Hill, and Pork Chop Hill became as familiar to them as Sicily, Salerno, and Anzio had been to their World War II brothers.

By late spring National Guardsmen began returning home and the character of the 179th changed again to an organization consisting of regular army officers, NCOs, and draftee replacements. After several weeks in reserve in late summer of 1952, the regiment returned to the front lines in eastern Korea. There, one of its members, Private First Class Charles George of Company C, was post-



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humously awarded the Medal of Honor, becoming the Forty-fifth Division's only winner of the nation's highest award for valor during the Korean War.<sup>49</sup> By early 1953 the 179th was in the infamous Heartbreak Ridge area where it remained until the cease-fire was implemented on July 27, 1953.

Even though the war in Korea continued for some time after the Oklahomans returned home, they were not idle. Beginning in September, 1952, the National Guard version of the Forty-fifth Division was reorganized and for more than a year there were two 179th Infantry Regiments. Finally on September 24, 1954, the army returned the regiment's colors during a ceremony at the State Fair of Oklahoma. Again the 179th Infantry was at home in western Oklahoma.<sup>50</sup>

The Korean War affected many members of the 179th who answered the call to mobilization in 1950. Fred Daugherty eventually rose to command the Forty-fifth Division. David C. Matthews became Oklahoma's adjutant general. Many NCOs in Korea received



*The army returned the regiment's colors during the Operation Colorback ceremony at the State Fair of Oklahoma in 1954.*

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commissions and became future leaders of the Oklahoma National Guard, including William Shirey who eventually became state chaplain. Omer Manley, the outstanding boxer, was captured by the Chinese on T-Bone Hill but returned to Oklahoma following his repatriation. Bill Gustafson lost a leg in combat but recovered and eventually was elected to the Oklahoma State Senate. Bob Green, the young engineering student who decided to "Go With The Men You Know," served as Oklahoma's director of transportation. A regiment is only as good as the men who serve in it, and there were many good men in the 179th.

## ENDNOTES

\* Penn V. Rabb, Jr., a Marlow, Oklahoma, native now a resident of Lawton, Oklahoma, is a 1956 graduate of the University of Oklahoma with a B.B.A. degree. He was a member of the 179th Infantry at the time of the 1950 Korean War mobilization. Following the Korean War, he served as an enlisted man and officer in the regiment until its deactivation in 1959. Rabb is the author of *The 179th Infantry Regiment in Peace and the Korean War: Tomahawk and Peace Pipe*, which will be published in the fall of 2000.

<sup>1</sup> Kenny A. Franks, *Citizen Soldiers: Oklahoma's National Guard* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press), 3-22.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 23-30.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 39-40.

<sup>5</sup> Forty-fifth Infantry Division, *Thunderbird Review* (Atlanta: Albert Love Enterprises, 1951), 12-31.

<sup>6</sup> Major General Frederick A. Daugherty (Ret.), interview by author, tape recording, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, April 10, 1993.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Colonel Anse H. Spears (Ret.), interview by author, tape recording, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, September 30, 1994.

<sup>9</sup> Colonel Fred P. Snyder (Ret.), interview by author, tape recording, Edmond, Oklahoma, May 23, 1995.

<sup>10</sup> Colonel Hal Adamson, Jr. (Ret.), interview by author, tape recording, Edmond, Oklahoma, May 23, 1995.

<sup>11</sup> Major General David C. Matthews (Ret.), interview by author, tape recording, Edmond, Oklahoma, May 23, 1995.

<sup>12</sup> Wayne Woodman, interview by author, tape recording, Elk City, Oklahoma, July 20, 1995.

<sup>13</sup> Brigadier General George M. Donovan (Ret.), interview by author, tape recording, Ardmore, Oklahoma, September 29, 1993.

<sup>14</sup> Ferrell Phillips, interview by author, tape recording, Walters, Oklahoma, May 23, 1994.

<sup>15</sup> William J. Bruner, interview by author, tape recording, Frederick, Oklahoma, July 16, 1993.

<sup>16</sup> William C. Shirey, interview by author, tape recording, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, August 21, 1993.

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<sup>17</sup> Bill Gustafson, interview by author, tape recording, El Reno, Oklahoma, August 23, 1995.

<sup>18</sup> National Guard Bureau Form 100, Report of National Guard Duty Performed, (Norman, Oklahoma), July, 1947, Oklahoma Military Department Archives, Oklahoma City.

<sup>19</sup> Vernon Askew, interview by author, tape recording, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, May 22, 1995.

<sup>20</sup> John Rigdon, interview by author, tape recording, Fountain Valley, California, April 20, 1995.

<sup>21</sup> Bruner interview.

<sup>22</sup> William C. Mitchell, Jr., interview by author, tape recording, Overbrook, Oklahoma, March 24, 1993.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Woodman interview.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Matthews interview.

<sup>29</sup> "Units of the 45th Division to Arrive Today," *Lawton (Oklahoma) Constitution*, August 10, 1947.

<sup>30</sup> "National Guard Conclude Camp," *Lawton Constitution*, August 24, 1947.

<sup>31</sup> "Pay Day Is Near for Members of Guard," *Lawton Constitution*, August 21, 1947.

<sup>32</sup> Matthews interview.

<sup>33</sup> Harold R. Liles, interview by author, tape recording, Lawton, Oklahoma, November 23, 1993.

<sup>34</sup> William C. McCoy, interview by author, tape recording, Lawton, Oklahoma, July 11, 1995.

<sup>35</sup> John L. Stacy, interview by author, tape recording, Frederick, Oklahoma, July 16, 1993.

<sup>36</sup> Liles interview.

<sup>37</sup> "45th to Train at Camp Polk for Duty; Recruits Are Sought," *The (Oklahoma City, Oklahoma) Daily Oklahoman*, August 2, 1950.

<sup>38</sup> Speairs interview.

<sup>39</sup> Gene Gower, interview by author, tape recording, Tecumseh, Oklahoma, June 30, 1995.

<sup>40</sup> George Payne, interview by author, tape recording, Guthrie, Oklahoma, May 23, 1995.

<sup>41</sup> Bob Green, interview by author, tape recording, Duncan, Oklahoma, May 1, 1995.

<sup>42</sup> Ray Wall, interview by author, tape recording, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, September 14, 1995.

<sup>43</sup> Richard A. Grizzle, interview by author, tape recording, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, September 14, 1995.

<sup>44</sup> Bill Warren, interview by author, tape recording, Norman, Oklahoma, May 24, 1995.

<sup>45</sup> Gustafson interview.

<sup>46</sup> Clarence Wilson, interview by author, tape recording, Frederick, Oklahoma, July 16, 1993.

<sup>47</sup> Robert Johnson, interview by author, tape recording, Ardmore, Oklahoma, May 20, 1995.

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<sup>48</sup> Department of the Army, "179th Infantry Command Report No. 2, January through April 1951," National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>49</sup> [United States Army], *Korean War Medal of Honor Recipients* (Seoul, Korea: Eighth United States Army Command History Office, 1982), 22.

<sup>50</sup> "Praised 45th Gets Battle Flags Back—Operation Colorback," *The* (Oklahoma City, Oklahoma) *Sunday Oklahoman*, September 26, 1954.